

AGENDA ITEM III

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

SUMMARY/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At the August 1999 meeting of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, the staff gave a status report on the accreditation study and informed the Board that it anticipated recommending accreditation policies at their October meeting. The Division of Academic Affairs initiated the study in the Fall of 1998 because of increasing public demand for accountability in higher education, questions from legislators and other stakeholders about the accredited status of programs that are eligible for accreditation, and the need to determine if program accreditation should be tied to the state's Performance Incentive Funding Initiative. The study was important for purposes of collecting data and involving the campuses in decisions regarding accreditation policies.

The Board has in the past generally recommended that institutions seek accreditation for all programs eligible for accreditation, but there were no Board-approved policies regarding accreditation. Institutions had been asked each year to update the accredited status of each of their degree programs listed on the Board's Inventory of Degree Programs. However, the Board has never had a system or procedures to verify the information submitted by institutions or to systematically track and monitor actions of accrediting agencies and the accredited status of programs. The agencies listed on the Board's list of accrediting agencies were agencies recognized by defunct organizations, the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) and the Council on Postsecondary Education (COPA).

Preliminary to developing and distributing the survey instrument used in the accreditation study, the staff conducted an exhaustive study to identify potential accrediting agencies. The staff and two subcommittees, one that represented the two-year colleges (chaired by Dr. Ray Garrity) and one that represented universities (chaired by Dr. Ken Rea), determined that agencies to be considered in the study should be those recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) and/or the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The survey instrument was structured around the 129 agencies identified by the staff. The questionnaire was sent to each chief academic officer, with instructions to involve the appropriate staff/faculty in responding to the questionnaire. The questionnaire asked for the following information: (1) the number of programs the institutions offer that are eligible for accreditation by each of the agencies; (2) the number of those programs that are accredited; and (3) the number of those programs that are unaccredited. The questionnaire also asked each chief academic officer to state his/her opinion regarding the relative importance (*mandatory*, *recommended*, or *optional*) of each accreditation and to submit criteria that should be used to determine which accreditations should be *mandatory*.

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At the August Board meeting, the staff discussed the actions regarding accreditation that were taken by the Council of Chief Academic Officers at its June 24, 1999 meeting. Every campus was represented at that meeting by the chief academic officer or his/her designee. From five (5) criteria identified by the staff from the campus responses to the questionnaire, the Council approved four (4) criteria that the Board of Regents should consider with regard to mandatory accreditation. The Council then applied those criteria to each of the programs/discipline areas to determine which accreditations should be mandatory.

At the September 23, 1999, meeting of the Council of Chief Academic Officers, the staff discussed program accreditation and related issues on fifteen programmatic areas that had been deferred by the Council at its June meeting. Criteria and related policy recommendations were again discussed and approved. The Council also reviewed and approved policies they had discussed and tentatively approved at the June meeting. Specific actions taken at the September meeting include:

1. discussed and approved the categorization (*mandatory, recommended, or optional*) of twelve (12) accrediting agencies that had been deferred at the June meeting (See Attachment A);
2. deferred action on industrial technology, engineering and engineering related programs until the subcommittee on industrial technology and engineering and engineering-related programs in three (3) programmatic areas (CIP Code Classifications 14 and 15);
3. recommended that the staff and subcommittees further study issues related to determining which accreditation, the National Association for Industrial Technology (NAIT) or the Accrediting Board of Engineering (ABET), is appropriate for specific programs that are eligible for accreditation by both ABET and NAIT;
4. reviewed and approved all identified accrediting agencies as either **mandatory, recommended, or optional**. Those agencies are listed on Attachments B, C, and D;
5. deferred action on proposed policies on degree designations for engineering and engineering-related programs; and
6. approved accreditation policies to be recommended to the Board of Regents.

The work of the subcommittee on industrial technology, engineering and engineering-related programs continues, and it is anticipated that the subcommittee will make recommendations to the Council of Chief Academic Officers in January 2000. Work on assessment of the accredited status of programs eligible for accreditation by agencies recognized by the Board and the development and

implementation of a data base and monitoring/tracking system will take time and staff. Examples of activities that need to be completed include:

1. complete the process of updating each institution's Inventory of Degree Programs;
2. redesign the format for the Board's Inventory of Degree Programs;
3. design a system for tracking and monitoring the accredited status and/or actions of accrediting agencies;
4. collect, categorize, and maintain accrediting criteria of mandatory and recommended agencies;
5. develop appropriate information to be included in the Board's Letter of Intent and/or Proposals for New Program Approval; and
6. work with each institution to establish time lines for achieving accreditation of unaccredited programs that are mandatory accreditations.

STAFF COMMENTS

The staff wishes to express its appreciation to the members of the Council of Chief Academic Officers, members of the various subcommittees, and other faculty and staff members who participated in completing the survey and/or assisted the staff in the related activities. Also, the staff would like to present the Council of Chief Academic Officers' recommendation that accreditation be tied to performance incentive funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The staff recommends approval of the attached Policy 2.12 on Professional Program Accreditation.**
2. **The staff recommends that the Board consider and forward to the Formula Funding Committee the Council of Chief Academic Officers' recommendation that accreditation be included as an indicator in performance incentive funding and that accreditation by both *mandatory* and *recommended* agencies be included to provide an incentive for institutions to seek accreditation by *recommended* accrediting agencies.**

POLICY ON PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM ACCREDITATION (POLICY 2.12)

2.12.01 General Policy on Program Accreditation:

Effective October 28, 1999, the Board of Regents recognizes accrediting agencies that it considers as mandatory, recommended, or optional for eligible programs offered by public community colleges, colleges/universities, and the Louisiana Technical College. A program that is eligible for accreditation by an agency that is considered mandatory must be accredited for continued program approval. If the program is not accredited, the Academic Affairs' staff will recommend to the Board of Regents that the program be terminated. The Board of Regents encourages institutions to obtain accreditation of programs that are eligible for accreditation by an agency that it recommends, but the accreditation is not essential for continued program approval. Accrediting agencies that are not considered as mandatory or recommended by the Board of Regents are considered optional, and the Board of Regents encourages institutions with eligible programs to evaluate the importance of those accreditations to its students.

2.12.02 Criteria for Mandatory Accreditation of Programs

Unless exempted by the Board of Regents, accreditation of a specific program will be deemed mandatory if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. the program prepares students for employment in occupations or professions that Louisiana and/or a significant number of states require licensure by an examination and for which graduation from an accredited program is one of the qualifying criteria to sit for the exam;
2. the program prepares students for employment in occupations or professions that require graduation from an accredited program for employment and/or advancement in the occupation or profession;
3. accreditation of the program is deemed critical for students to be admitted to a more advanced degree program; and

4. accreditation is deemed mandatory by the Board of Regents because of the critical nature of the program and its importance to the state and/or because accreditation is important for national credibility and recognition.

2.12.03 Unaccredited Programs that are Eligible for Accreditation by an Agency that is classified as Mandatory by the Board of Regents.

An unaccredited program that is eligible for accreditation by an agency that is considered *mandatory* on the effective date of this policy (October 28, 1999) must achieve accreditation within the time agreed upon by the Academic Affairs staff and the institution. Failure to do so will result in the Academic Affairs' recommending that the Board of Regents terminate the program.

2.12.04 Actions of Accreditation Agencies

An institution must report all disciplinary actions, such as warning, probation, or withdrawal of accredited status, and a brief explanation of the conditions and/or deficiencies that resulted in the action to the Board of Regents upon receipt of the official notification of the action by the agency. The institution must submit a copy of the institution's response to the report regarding disciplinary action of an accrediting agency, along with a copy of the original report of the agency, to the Board of Regents.

2.12.05 Exemption from Routine Program Review by the Board of Regents

A program that is accredited and is not on warning or probation by an agency that is recognized as either mandatory or recommended will ordinarily be exempt from routine Board of Regents' program reviews. Special or extenuating circumstances may prompt review of a particular program in a particular institution or a statewide review of a specific program or programs.

2.12.06 Annual Reporting of the Accredited Status of Programs

Each community college, college/university, and the Louisiana Technical College shall submit an annual report on the accredited status of all degree programs offered. The report shall include documentation, if not previously

submitted, of actions taken by accrediting agencies since the last annual report.

2.12.07 Removal of Mandatory Classification of an Accrediting Agency

An agency classified as a mandatory on the Board of Regents' Recognized Accrediting Agencies will retain that classification unless it is removed by action of the Board on a recommendation from the Academic Affairs staff. Such a recommendation will generally result from a determination, through an appropriate review of the staff and the Council of Chief Academic Officers, that the agency's policies, practices, and/or actions are inappropriate and/or fail to meet the highest professional standards.

2.12.08 Accreditation of Programs in the Louisiana Technical College

The Louisiana Technical College will not be subject to the policies on accreditation until the year 2001. The Technical College's first annual report on the accredited status of all programs offered by each of its technical college campuses shall be submitted by July 1, 2000. A report on the Technical College programs eligible for certification and the certification status of each of those programs shall be submitted to the Board of Regents by July 1, 2000, and annually thereafter.